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The Relevance of Green Branding on Competitive Strategies in Service Firms

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Abstract

The study evaluated qualitatively the relevance of green branding in service firms. Drawing the manufacturing industry perspective. Two objectives were drawn for this bordering on environmental actors and green innovation as it affects competitive advantage, The extant literature revealed a strong impact of these predator variables on competitive advantage in service industry management. The findings was that the performance of green innovation, product and process has a positive influence on the performance of the firms, although green innovation process is rarely discussed in the literature, it is very important to highlight the green innovation process, as it is easy to imitate the final product, compared to the process. Recommendations were made on the need to continue to uphold green innovation and major environmental factors to promote firm performance and profitability.

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1 Introduction

Companies and organizations are today in a business environment which became more committed to environmental issues. The reason is that stakeholders' expectations regarding sustainability and environmental protection are increasing. Consumers' wants are more oriented to sustainable and eco-friendly products (Siegenthaler, 2012). Employees' management style of environmental organizations is acclaimed and spread. National and international legislations are getting tougher concerning environmental care (Rodríguez-Ibeas, 2006).

In fact, the general public is now more concerned about environmental issues; that has direct influences in the same direction on economics and other aspects of the organizations' environment (Rodríguez-Ibeas, 2006). Brorson & Larsson (2006), explained that organizations have to integrate environmental care as part of their operations due to the reason that they are in a competitive and global settings environment.

This care for environmental issues began with the publication of The Population Bomb by Paul Ehlrich in 1969 and Limits to Growth in 1971 by the Club of Rome (Ramirez, 2012). Then, since the early eighties, the ecological awareness by the society is increasing with the introduction of the sustainable development's concept (Schleicher, 1989). Three trends have been mainly enlightened: the warning on the scarce of natural resources, the reasons of global warming and its negative consequences, and the loss of biodiversity (Nagra, 2010). During the last few years, this phenomenon became more important and was spread in most of the countries and most of the companies (Tjärnemo, 2001).

Organizations, especially in the sports industry, are now considering that they have an impact in short and long term on the environment and its resources. They are adapting their businesses and processes according to it, to the consumers demand, and the legislation (Berkhout, 2012). As Miles & Covin (2000) cited, social, economic, and global environment since the 1990's have resulted in an environmental performance becoming an increasingly important component of a company's reputation. The two authors also defined the corporate reputation as an intangible asset that is related to branding and finance performance.

Today, the natural environment is an important arena for economy and competition. Ecological issues regarding energy, natural resources, pollution, and waste offer both competitive opportunities and constraints. They are changing the competitive landscape in several industries (Shrivastava, 2007).

In order to answer the switched demand successfully, organizations are implementing changes referring to green branding theories and tools (Berkhout, 2012). Environmental issues became a competitive aspect for organizations. The legal requirement is answered by threshold resources. For that reason, organizations can gain competitive advantage by managing ecological variables (Shrivastava, 2007). The way environmental issues are handle by an organization can become a core competence for it.

Incorporating this concept of green, environmental care, in the organizational process was, in the origin, done without the ambition of creating growth but respecting the environment (Rodríguez-Ibeas, 2006). Nevertheless, when more organizations started implemented it, they aimed to gain competitive advantage from their competitors, claiming that their products and services were less damaging the environment than their competitors' products and services (Peattie, 2001). According to Peattie (1995), this behaviour was more tactical than implementing real environmental oriented changes.

With the raise of the environmental awareness, some non-environmental organizations implemented a green communication about products or services without green attributes (Rodríguez-Ibeas, 2006). These organizations are realizing green washing. Green branding defines branding activities of an organization which are associating sustainable development with business growth opportunities (Clarke-Hill et al., 2008). Our research question for this thesis was to explore how organizations are using green branding as a competitive advantage?

The problem

For Farnsworth (2000), the environmental movement's popularity makes it tempting for those with just a few energy-efficient or green-lite products to constitute environmentally sound construction. This practice is what is called green washing: disinformation on the environmental care accuracy (Laufer, 2003). Ramus & Montiel (2005), explained green washing as resulting by the fact that companies are not required by law to publish environmental policy statements or to verify if these statements are true, by using independent third parties. In fact, external stakeholders often wonder, when a company claims being environmental committed, if its products or services are truly respecting the environment (Montiel & Ramus, 2005).

Green washing is creating doubts to stakeholders which makes more difficult for organizations to implement a green branding strategy, while having a real environmental care approach (Kaynak, 2003; Calantone et al., 2002). Green washing has a triple negative effect on organizations, even for organisations which have not green washing practices. These effects are concerning: image, satisfaction and trust, which are the three drivers of brand equity (Chen, 2010).

However, regarding to the demand in green products and green services, green branding remains a key factor in order to gain competitive advantage; "environmental efficiencies are a way to gain cost avoidance and competitive advantage" (Wever, 1996). For an organization having eco-label certified products and services are an accurate way to prove that they are environmental care committed (Welford, 1998). Eco-label appears has a tool to fight against green washing. Green branding, appearing as a way to gain image, trust, and confidence, leads an organization to a situation of advantage over its competitors. How organizations are using green branding as a competitive advantage? This fundamental question was what this thesis aimed to find an answer to.

Objectives

1. To determine the relevance of environmental factors of green marketing on competitive strategies in the service industry;
2. To determine relevance of value chain on competitive advantage in the service industry.

Review of related literature

Concept of Green Branding

The term of green branding is popular in United Kingdom and other countries, but in the international business environment it does not have a universal meaning. For some people, "green" is associated with organic or clear water, but for others "green" is related to human rights or politic. In countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom green is associated with verdacy and nature but in Spain green is associated with low cost and low quality goods (Peattie, 2001). Environmental branding is the term that other countries, such as USA, use. The word "environmental" generates also problems of misunderstanding. Another criticism of the concept of "environmental" branding and management is that it suggests something out there rather than (Peattie, 2001).

According to Tjärnemo (2001), there is not only one definition that fits for environmental branding. Coddington & Florian (1993), defines environmental branding as "branding activities that recognize environmental stewardship as a business development responsibility and business growth opportunity". In addition, Peattie (1995), provides another definition of environmental branding, "the holistic management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying the requirements of customers and society, in a profitable and sustainable way".

From the green aspect, branding offers a creative way to hire people and to promote greener lifestyles. From the business side, branding offers a way to engage people to the firms and brands that are more implicated in corporate responsibility (Grant, 2007).

Grant (2007) states that green branding is a creative opportunity to innovate in ways that make difference, and at the same time achieve business success. To reach this goal of achieving business success in an environmentally market, companies have two solutions: cost saving and market opportunity potentials. By reducing the amount of raw materials and energy used in production, as well as reuse and recycle, companies can save money (Tjärnemo, 2001). The concept of green covers all aspects of life (attachment 3). Therefore, individuals have different ways to perceive what green branding is.

Five I's of green branding

According to Grant (2007), five key points enable to build an effective green branding. The theory of Five I's, is a red line that companies have to follow to avoid mistakes, and green washing.

1. *Intuitive* - making better alternatives accessible and easy to hold.
   This means making green products or services seem normal. Enjoying life in a sustainable way appears too difficult and arduous for most of the people. Marketers have to make it intuitive. They need more ideas like organic (Grant, 2007).
2. *Integrative* – associating commerce, technology, social effect and ecology

The main idea is sustainability, by combining economic development with social and environmental development. It is also a shift for commercial branding, which has not in the past considered green and social objectives, except as a mean to a business end (Grant, 2007).

3. *Innovative* – creative new products and new lifestyles.
   A majority of people is saying that green innovation and entrepreneurship in the next twenty years will be like the information and technology space over the last twenty years. For instance, people have started to use the term g-commerce, for green e-commerce. With Internet, it is now possible to collaborate in design, build communities and so on (Grant, 2007).
4. *Inviting* – A positive choice not an obligation.
   Green now is partly a design challenge. A green product is often better, more efficient, durable, healthy, affordable, and so on. But organizations also need to tackle the culture of green lifestyles, create new myths and codes which are utopian, joyful and fun, rather than seeming like unpleasant medicine to avoid a dystopia (Grant, 2007).
5. *Informed* – Lack of information is what most disturbs people's behaviour.
   The green branding is more about education and participation. There is a revolution going on in health, lifelong learning and citizenship due to the new accessibility of information (Grant, 2007).

Tjärnemo (2001), states "there is not only one definition that fits for environmental branding". This quote can be applied to theories, indeed the Five I's is not the only one used in the green branding field. Authors contribute to implement green branding with other explanations. Even Grant developed also in 2007 another model of green branding.

The green branding grid

Grant (2007), has also developed the green branding grid, which is composed of eighteen types of green branding. According to Grant (2007), these strategies are implemented in order to make this green alternatives seem normal and accepted. They are divided in two 3 × 3 grids. The first grid is illustrated in appendix 1. According to Grant (2007), the three vertical categories are referring to what degree the branding activity contributes. Companies can adopt one of these approaches to develop a good green branding strategy. Indeed by taking actions a company can change its previous status by becoming greenest instead of greener. They are divided in two 3 × 3 grids. The first grid is illustrated in appendix 1. According to Grant (2007) the three vertical categories are referring to what degree the branding activity contributes.

a. **Green** - Setting new standards: an old or classical branding applied to greener products, brands and companies. Grant states that greener is "greener than the substitutes and competitors" (2007, p.61). These companies have their act together and have modified their supply chain, sourcing, distribution and so on. The result appears in commercial outcome. Sustainability is the target that each company has to reach every year. The key guideline is to be clear about what a company is doing and acting for. The most important is not to make something normal seem greener – greenwashing.
b. **Greener** - sharing responsibility: this is what Grant (2007), call "new branding". Customers collaborate and participate with companies by sharing with them responsibility. In this case, companies are not selling their greenness, but they are trying to involve people in a public activity. In the selling process the enthusiasm is added, this means "a bigger enthusiasm, clearly separated from just buying a brand and ways the audience can contribute and participate" Grant (2007). At the end the result is a bigger outcome, the commercial results being a by-product of this. A company using this strategy will be different in terms of what it brings to market – green Products.
c. **Greenest** – responsibility through innovation: organizations in this part, according to Grant (2007), seek to change how people consume and what they consume. Green innovations can be the solution to make a greener way of life for everyone. Nevertheless, the challenge is to combine new products or services with the daily habits of customers in a completely normal and acceptable cultural way. Green innovations can help to set up the "new normal" Grant (2007). This column of approaches includes the three objectives of green branding: commercial, green and cultural outcomes

According to Grant (2007), the three horizontal levels show the hierarchical levels of branding. Inside each nine categories seen previously, firms are setting different strategic approaches. This is figured in the second 3 x 3 grid and is illustrated in appendix 2.

A1. Framing vs. pointing: according to Grant (2007), two strategies can be used when it comes to present policy. “Giving a progressive policy a familiar, intuitive and accessible frame or

Eco-labels

Peattie (1995), classifies a product as green when it meets customers’ needs and wants, and when it “is socially acceptable and produced in a sustainable manner” (Peattie, 2001). These definitions go together with important criteria: a dual focus on environmental and social performance, a continuous improvement orientation, a use of both competitors’ offerings at present and past products as a mark for comparison, and an emphasis on significant change (Peattie, 2001). A green product is different from a grey product, when its product life cycle is not evaluated according to its sales over time, but to its physical life from “cradle-to-grave” (Peattie, 2001). When measuring the greenness of a product, various characteristics have to be taken into consideration: what goes into the product (raw materials and human resources), the purpose of the product, the consequences of product use and misuse, the risks involved in product use, the product durability, the product disposal and finally where the product is made (Peattie, 2001).

Eco-labels can be a proof used by a firm to inform and show their customers that it has employed environmentally sensitive production or distribution methods (Bruce & Laroiya, 2007). According to the Global Ecolabelling Network (2004), an eco-label is a label which identifies overall environmental preference of a product or service within a product category based on life cycle considerations. Contrary to an eco-label, a self-styled environmental symbol or a claim label is developed by a manufacturer for its product (Global Ecolabelling Network, 2004). Whereas the eco-label is granted by an independent third party, and not influenced by the company who seeks certification (United Nation Office for Project Services, 2009).

Problems occur when discussing about eco-labels. Indeed many product labels exist without being “real” eco-labels but claim labels. These self-declared claim labels could be symbol or logo being added to a product or services by the manufacturer itself (Chan et al., 2018; Chan et al., 2012).

There are several definitions, or levels, of eco-label; all of them make a difference between a simple logo and a proper eco-label thanks to important aspects and characteristics. To be trustworthy an eco-label must have essential features. “Voluntary”, this means participation in an eco-labelling system cannot be imposed upon suppliers; “distinction in environmental performance”; “sound scientific evidence”; this means that the labels’ information must respect standard, measurable and state of the art scientific data; “based on life cycle considerations”, third party and independent organizations; “objectivity”, means the eco-labelling scheme is usually guaranteed by representatives of industry, government, retailers, consumer in the definition of the environmental criteria (United Nation Office for Project Services, 2009).

Brands generate value for companies in four ways. First strong brands usually obtain price premiums from either consumers or resellers. Second, strong brands obtain higher market share. Third, because of customer loyalty, successful brands generate more stable and less risky earning streams. Finally, successful brands offer avenues for further growth (Doyle & Stern, 2006)

“Brand-building effort has to be aligned with organizational processes that help deliver the promises to customers through all company departments, intermediaries, suppliers, etc., as all these play an important role in the experience customers have with the brand” (Ghodeswar, 2008). The whole organization and the external entities intervening have a role in the construction of brand image.

The brand image is the way to create superior value, compiling added values, for a brand in the buyers’ opinion. Brand image is also the asset of successful brands (Biggar & Selame, 1992). Brand image has to be built according to four layers (attachment 5): “a quality product, a basic brand that differentiate the product, and then augmented and potential layers of branding which enhance its values” (Doyle & Stern, 2006).

Attributes of green branding

“Brands able to be classified as green are those whose users’ primary associations are environmental conservation and sustainable practices” (Insch, 2011). Apaolaza Ibáñez et al. (2005), defined green brand as ‘‘a specific set of brand attributes and benefits related to the reduced environmental impact of the brand and its perception as being environmentally sound’’. “A well-implemented green brand identity should provide benefits to environmentally conscious consumers” (Apaolaza Ibáñez et al., 2005). Insch (2011) distinguishes green brands from other brands by “their focus on green values is a distinguishing feature of green brands”.

For Rex & Baumann (2007), cited by Insch (2011), the difficulties in verifying the environmental effectiveness of green brands create scepticism and criticism among consumers. They remain suspicion of green-washing and resist to support green brands. Rex & Baumann (2007), cited by Insch (2011), also specified that “green brands must consider the limits of traditional eco-labeling systems that summarize technical information”. “Eco-labels might add credibility to green brands, but are unlikely to actively communicate the array of functional and emotional benefits consumers, other than the greenest, seek” (Insch, 2011). Apaolaza Ibáñez et al. (2005), research found that “positioning a brand as a “green brand” entails an active communication and differentiation of the brand from its competitors through its environmentally sound attributes”. According to Walker & Hanson (1998), cited by (Insch, 2011), green branding communication of green brands has to focus on quality of life, socio-economic impacts, waste disposal and pollution management and customers’ attitudes and behaviours. As Apaolaza Ibáñez et al. (2005) cited: “effective green positioning involves brand communication and differentiation based on functional attributes and emotional benefits”. Ecologically sustainable products will not be commercially successful if green brand attributes are not effectively communicated (Apaolaza Ibáñez et al., 2005).

Green positioning must be associated with green branding (Juwaheer et al., 2012). This green positioning can be functional and/or emotional. When using a product or service, consumers experience functional benefits; these functional benefits, for example the improvement of environmental quality, are reliable when the environmentally sound benefit is generalized to a majority of consumers (Apaolaza Ibáñez et al., 2005). However, functional positioning strategy faces general disadvantages: “they can often be easily imitated, they assume rational buyer decisions and they may reduce the flexibility of brand differentiation” (Kroeber-Riel, 1991, cited by Apaolaza Ibáñez et al., 2005). In addition, or as an alternative of functional benefit positioning strategy, green positioning can be based on emotional benefits (Apaolaza Ibáñez et al., 2005). This positioning strategy involves three different types:

1. A feeling of well-being associated with acting in an altruistic way. Environmentally conscious consumers experience personal satisfaction by contributing to the improvement of the “common good” environment (Apaolaza Ibáñez et al., 2005);
2. Auto-expression benefits through the socially visible consumption of green brands. Environmentally conscious consumers experience personal satisfaction by exhibiting their environmental consciousness to others (Apaolaza Ibáñez et al., 2005);
3. Nature-related benefits stemming from sensations and feelings normally experienced through contact with nature. These are the result of a sensation of “emotional affinity towards nature,”, e.g. “loving nature” or “feeling one with nature” (Apaolaza Ibáñez et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, a green positioning has to be “based on relevant environmental advantages of the product compared to competing conventional products, and may refer to production processes, product use and/or product elimination” (Apaolaza Ibáñez et al., 2005). Apaolaza Ibáñez & Hartmann (2006), see in labelling a way to guarantee effective environmental benefit of a product or service; it is a support of green branding.

Concept of Competitive Strategies

“Competition is at the core of the success or failure of firms” (Porter, 1985). Competition determines if a business is appropriated or not. This means according to Porter (1985), that an uncompetitive business cannot survive or work well. The key elements to evaluate organizations performance and observe if a business is in an appropriate situation are: innovation, cohesive culture and good implementation (Porter, 1985).

In 1985, Porter cited competitive advantage as describing the way a firm can choose and implement a generic strategy to achieve and sustain competitive advantage. The author sees competitive advantage as the interplay between cost leadership and differentiation with the scope of a firm’s activities (Shane, 1993; Rothwell, 1991). That explains why Doyle & Stern (2006), integrated competitive advantage as one of the five aspects of marketing with: successfully meeting the goals of an organisation, focussing on needs, organisation and considering marketing as part of the business’ philosophy. For these two authors, marketing is not only about being able to meet customer needs, but about doing better than competitors. They identified the choice of a supplier by customers as selecting the best value.

Walters & Rainbird (2004), identify the value as main determinant of the buying process; it is what buyers are willing to pay. They defined the superior value perceived by the customer as: offering lower price than competitors for equivalent benefits or providing unique benefits or providing unique benefits more than offset a higher price. If a company is unable to have a competitive advantage, offer a better value than what competitors do to customers, the direct consequence will be the loss of market shares (Minoja et al., 2010). When facing this kind of difficulty, “the organisation has few choices but cutting prices and profit margins in order to reduce this loss of market" (Doyle & Stern, 2006). Here is the reason why competitive advantage is, or should be, at the centre of every firm's strategy.

Competitive strategy is the search for a favourable competitive position in an industry, the fundamental arena which competition occurs. It "aims to establish a profitable and sustainable position against the forces that determine industry competition" (Porter, 1985). A competitive strategy must be chosen in the regard of two variables. The first one is the attractiveness of an industry in a long-term profitability perspective and the factors determining it. The second one is what is determining the competitive rivalry and the competitive position of the firm among its industry (Porter, 1985). Strategy is used to approach industry attractiveness and competitive position change (Thompson & Coe, 1997). The competitive strategy is also chosen according to how a firm aims to shape industry attractiveness and competitive position (Thompson & Coe, 1997).

Gaining competitive advantage

The value chain

As we cited before, according to Porter (1985), there are two ways to reach competitive advantage: cost leadership and differentiation. To find the way to use and enhance competitive advantage, firms are using a basic tool: the value chain (attachment 1).

The value chain is a tool that divides a business into distinct activities as following: designing, producing, marketing, and distributing its products or services (Porter, 1985). In order to be an efficient tool, the value chain has to be constructed at the level of the business unit; and the activities must be isolated when being technologically and strategically distinct (Lancaster & Walters, 2000). The value chain "breaks down what a company does into discrete activities" (Wever, 1996). It separates the firm's activities into two groups, the primary and support activities. The primary activities include: inbound logistics, operations, outbound logistic, marketing and sales, and services (Porter, 1985). The support activities are: procurement, technology development, human resources management, and firm infrastructures (Porter, 1985).

Then the scope of a firm's activities influences these value chain's areas (Glaser, 2017). "To gain competitive advantage, the value chain has to be tailored and the scope has to be widened" (Porter, 1985). Value is added at each step along the chain (Wever, 1996). The exploitation of interrelationship among the value chain that serve different segments, industries or geographic areas is the way scope can generate competitive advantage (Glaser, 2017). It is important for an organization to divide its activities into the value chain for the reason that it permits to identify the linkage among the activities that are central to competitive advantage (Glaser, 2017). If a firm has a lack of competences in one or some activities of the value chain, or a shortage of links between them, it can do coalitions with other firms in the aim to palliate internal inadequacy and externally reach competitive advantage (Glaser, 2017).

The three generic strategies: cost leadership, differentiation, and focus

"Competitive advantage is not the goal in itself, but a first step to reach sustainable competitive advantage" (Porter, 1985). To realize it, firms can use the two basic types, low cost or differentiation (Day, 1989). These two types are both the result of using better than its rivals the five competitive forces, suppliers, buyers, new entrants, substitutes, and industry, by a firm (Porter, 1985). When these two types are combined with the scope of activities, they lead to three generic strategies that are cost leadership, differentiation and focus (Day, 1989). The last one, the focus strategy, has two alternatives: cost focus and differentiation focus (Porter, 1985). The three generic strategies (attachment 2) emphasize that the competitive advantage is at the heart of every strategy. Competitive advantage is resulting in how a firm choses to attain it (Chandler & Hanks, 1993).

"Cost leadership strategy is a firm sets out to become the low-cost producer in its industry" (Porter, 1985). The sources of cost advantage are varied and depend on the structure of the industry (Prajogo, 2007). For instance, it can be the pursuit of economies of scale, proprietary technology, and preferential access to raw materials (Porter, 1985). In more cases, becoming a low-cost leader involves to exploit all these sources of cost advantage or as many as possible according to the industry (Prajogo, 2007). When a firm is achieving to obtain and sustain cost advantage, it is becoming an "above-average performer in its industry" (Porter, 1985). A difficulty in cost leadership strategy is that the firm cannot ignore the bases of differentiation (Prajogo, 2007). Cost leaders are in most cases competing on the standard products in their industries but organizations need to be aware of the differentiation process and evolutions lead by competitors (Prajogo, 2007). In addition, they have to monitor the source of value of products or services bring to customers "in order to foresee a shift of demand" (Porter, 1985). When different firms are competing for cost leadership, market share is the most crucial criteria of success or failure (Baack & Boggs, 2008).

2 Results and Discussions

The literature is very useful to gain additional insight and add knowledge for this conceptual paper. The literature enables to provide results on the role of green innovation and green promotion as a marketing strategy. Polonsky (1994), stated that green marketing is a tool to promote green products to satisfy customers' needs and wants. In the final analysis, a recent study by Leonidou et al. (2013), reveals that the green market program is beneficial towards the competitive strategies. In line with the recent study, Fraj et al. (2011), reported that green marketing strategy helps the firms to manage their resources efficiently and improve corporate image and reputation and leads firms to improve profitability. Based on the literature, it was found that other than green innovation and green promotion, marketing mix comprises of product, pricing, distribution and promotion also applied as a green marketing strategy. Following an exhaustive review, it can be concluded that, the green marketing strategy contributes to the firms' profitability, competitive advantage and encourage a greener pattern of consumption among consumers (Dewi et al., 2019). The green innovation, research constructs can be divided into green products and process, including the innovation in technologies that are involved in waste recycling, green products design and energy saving (Chen et al., 2006). Green innovation represents with the concept of environmental protection into the design of the products. The second construct is a green promotion also referred as the communication that promotes the product and the services. Besides promoting the green advertising campaign, it should also have the characteristics to enhance the corporate image of social responsibility. Thus, the success of the green innovation and green promotion is a success factor to influence the competitive strategies. Lastly, the competitive strategies is measured on the economic performance (financial returns, market share, and sales growth) and operational performance (aspects that relate to the improvement of process efficiency such as product quality). The factors outlined in this study are analysed using the framework developed to examine the relationship of the green marketing strategy and the competitive strategies.

3 Conclusion

The findings steered us to draw conclusions about the relationship between green innovation and green branding with the competitive strategies and make recommendations for future research. It is clear that the performance of green innovation, product and process has a positive influence on the performance of the firms, although green innovation process is rarely discussed in the literature, it is very important to highlight the green innovation process, as it is easy to imitate the final product, compared to the process. This conceptual paper is significant because it will explore various green marketing strategies adopted by Malaysian certified ISO 14001 EMS firms. Given that knowledge about the existence of green initiatives in Malaysia is still lacking, the study can add knowledge to the managers' understanding to refine their marketing strategy. Subsequently, the higher rate of success will encourage other businesses to adopt the green initiatives therefore, will increase the number of ISO 14001 EMS firms and eventually embrace the sustainability agenda. With a growing recognition by the Malaysian government of the importance of sustainability, green firms in Malaysia should, therefore, be more emphasized or thorough in implementing various strategies in performing green initiatives. To further develop the sustainability agenda in Malaysia and the best interest of future generations, firms should keen to the best of green practice. Considering the rapid and accelerating growth of the green products worldwide, the marketers must seize this opportunity to identify the best green marketing strategy in winning the consumers' needs and wants.

Conflict of interest statement
The authors declared that they have no competing interests.

Statement of authorship
The authors have a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The authors have approved the final article.

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